



County of McHenry – Division of Water Resources

# Water Resources Action Plan

## Section IV: Education and Outreach

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# **Water Resources Action Plan**

## **Section 4. Education and Outreach**

### **A) Introduction**

Clean and safe drinking water is vital to the way of life in McHenry County. It is a critical component of the economy, health and pro-active lifestyle. Historically, drinking water from the County's aquifers has been abundant and readily available. This relative abundance has caused the everyday user to overlook the resource and take it for granted. However, with population growth and development, this resource has come under pressure, and in some cases, is being pumped beyond the safe yield.

Users must be aware of the potential impacts that may result from negligence or lack of concern. It is the responsibility of the whole community to maintain a safe and healthy water supply system now and into the future. Only through community outreach and education can this be realized.

Alan R. Andreasen defines "social marketing" as the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society. The goals of the McHenry County Water Resources Community Outreach and Social Marketing Program is to:

- Create awareness about the importance of the County's groundwater supply
- Educate the community about how their actions affect groundwater quality and quantity
- Influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences.

The plan outlines a public outreach and education program that focuses on awareness and a social marketing program that has a goal of "Action." Additionally, educational information supporting the Water Resource Action Plan will continually be added to the Water Resources Website ([www.mchenryh2o.com](http://www.mchenryh2o.com)). Use of this information is public and reproduction is encouraged by all interested parties.

#### **Priority Audiences**

- Children
  - Children Pre-K - 12
  - "Scouts", "4-H", "AWANA", and other like clubs
  - Teachers
  - Parent/Teacher Associations
  - Administrators and Curriculum Directors

- McHenry County Schools Environmental Education Program
- Residents
  - Owners
  - Renters
- Business and Industry
  - Owners
  - Supervisors/Operators
  - Landscape and Nursery Owners/Operators
  - Agriculturalists
- Local Governments
  - Planners
  - Administrators/Directors
  - Operators
  - Elected Officials
- Community Based Organizations and Special Interest Groups
- McHenry County College Students

#### **Locations of interest**

- Schools
- Libraries
- Local Governments
- Police Departments
- Fairs
- Expos

#### **Implementation**

Education and Outreach activities can be accomplished through the use of websites, displays, training, presentations, and in-services. The County's efforts are detailed on the Water Resources website. Please see the "Education" and "Events" pages for more information.

- **Website:** Water Resources has a comprehensive website ([www.mchenryh2o.com](http://www.mchenryh2o.com)) containing a multitude of information, including, but not limited to:
  - Lesson Plans for Teachers
  - Activities for Children
  - Brochures, Pamphlets, Fliers, and Handbooks for Residents
  - Best Management Practices and Model Policies for Local Governments and Business/Industry

- **Media:** Some common tools of the media can be employed to spread the message. These can include:
  - News Stories
  - Newsletter Articles
  - Press Releases
  - Mass Media Ads
  - Billboards
  - Radio Interviews
  - Event Calendars
  - Postcards
  
- **Displays:** Traveling “Water” poster display board.
  
- **Training:** McHenry County has staff trained to conduct workshops on the following topic: Snow and Ice Operations. Currently the County is able to conduct training in English, but consideration has been given to also offer it in Spanish. Over time, the County will also be developing workshops on other “water resources” topics found within the Water Resource Action Plan.
  
- **Festivals or other community activities:** Water Resources has materials, including arts and crafts activities for children and brochures for the adult audience, as well as a traveling display board.
  
- **Presentations:** Water Resources is available to give presentations to a variety of audiences. To schedule a presentation, please log-on to our Water Resources Website and click on “Contact Us.”
  
- **Mutual In-service:** Water Resources is available to meet with the staff of local governments, schools, business/industry, and other community-based organizations in McHenry County.

### **Policy Recommendations**

It is said that education ends when the target audience knows the information. Conversely, social marketing ends when the target audience changes the behavior and takes action. Therefore, in the short term, the expected outcome is a heightened awareness, and in the long term, the expected outcome is action. Knowing where you are starting (awareness, interest, or desire) helps direct limited resource dollars and staff time to the most effective outreach tools.

- Additional educational materials should be developed by the Solid Waste Manager of McHenry County, McHenry County Department of Health, and McHenry County Water Resources regarding:
  - Prevention of chloride contamination of groundwater
  - Proper disposal of medications, personal care products, and other household products
  - Proper use and disposal of pesticides
  - Household hazardous waste collection
- McHenry County Department of Health should continue to update and expand the educational materials regarding private water wells and onsite wastewater treatment systems which are available on the department's website.
- McHenry County Department of Health should consider promoting an Onsite Wastewater Treatment Month similar to Safe Drinking Water Month.
- McHenry County Department of Planning and Development should continue to update and expand the educational materials regarding floodways, wetlands, and stormwater which are available on the department's website.
- McHenry County Division of Transportation should continue to update and expand the educational materials regarding National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) Permit and Program, which are available on the department's website.
- McHenry County Schools Environmental Education Program (MCSEEP) should continue to develop and enhance lesson plans for presentation to grades K-12 countywide. Additionally, should enhance their online resource library with water related topics for educators.
- McHenry County Division of Water Resources should:
  - Participate in Safe Drinking Water Month
  - Maintain and enhance the Water Resources Website with additional educational materials about groundwater quantity and quality
  - Publish a monthly newspaper article
  - Partner with other departments to coordinate the distribution of water related educational information
  - Enhance the community outreach and social marketing program as outlined above

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